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SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: UN SECURITY COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS,
APRIL 28, 2009

REF: STATE 3924

¶1. USUN may draw on the points in paragraph 2 for the April 28 Security Council consultations on UNOCI and the political situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Talking points on sanctions are also included.

¶2. Begin points:

--The United States welcomes Ambassador Choi, and thanks him for his briefing. We express our continuing support for the invaluable, tireless work being done by UNOCI personnel. I would like also to extend our thanks to President Compaore for his facilitation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

--The United States is disappointed that there has been no date set for the elections, which have been rescheduled several times. We are also concerned about the lack of sustained progress on disarmament. I repeat what we said in January: We urge the parties to set a realistic election date and make public the timeline of all the steps that must be taken to organize the election. The laying down of weapons and the technical preparations for the elections require cooperation from all sides, who have made repeated promises that they should keep. The Ivorian people surely expect this from their leaders.

--We welcome plans for a sizeable number of international observers for the elections; their presence will support credible and transparent elections.

--We welcome the relatively stable security situation and the steady, if slow, progress being made in extending the government's authority throughout the country. As the Secretary-General's recent report indicates, a great deal remains to be done, particularly with regard to law and order. Inadequate police staffing, shortages of court and prison personnel, and overcrowded prisons are all causes for concern.

--We are also concerned about the reported proliferation of small arms, and would like additional information, with particular emphasis on any cross-border movement of weapons or armed persons. The reporting from UNOCI and UNMIL has been somewhat inconsistent on the extent to which this is a problem, despite coordinated patrols and exchanges of information between the two missions. We reiterate our call for all parties to cooperate with the impartial forces to ensure that any weapons surrendered by former combatants are controlled and inventoried.

--The current sanctions regime for Cote d'Ivoire was created to address threats to peace and the national reconciliation

process, and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

--The regime is designed to provide an inducement for all the parties in Cote d'Ivoire, including its government, to move toward free and fair elections in as short a timeframe as possible.

--For that reason, the United States will continue to support those sanctions until credible elections have taken place, steps have been taken to address arms trafficking, and additional measures have been implemented to increase fiscal transparency.

--It is very troubling that there continue to be violations of the arms embargo, travel ban, assets freeze, and diamond ban. We urge all Member States, particularly Cote d'Ivoire and its neighbors, to comply with their UN obligations to implement these measures.

--The United States remains very concerned about continuing reports of rape and violence against women and girls. We welcome the efforts UNOCI is making to increase and strengthen the role of women in the police force, and to build and bolster the efforts of Ivorian women's organizations who are working to address these difficult issues.

--The United States welcomes the detailed discussion of benchmarks and indicators of progress included as an annex to the Secretary-General's report. As he indicates, many of the factors contributing to the eventual conclusion of the Ivorian peace process are not within the UN's control. We agree wholeheartedly that the benchmarks should be periodically refined, adjusted and tested against a realistic assessment of the situation.

--In particular, we believe the benchmarks laid out for measuring progress towards elections are clear, concrete and measurable. These are steps that should be achievable within a relatively short period of time, particularly in view of the extensive preparations that have already been made.

--Quite a few of the steps laid out in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), extension of state authority, and security sector reform are much harder to accomplish, longer-term, and more expensive. The Council should keep these areas under careful review to be sure that we have not tied ourselves, or the mission, to unattainable goals.

CLINTON